UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/49/176/Add.1
31 October 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-ninth session
Agenda items 105 and 113 (d)

REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: OTHER HUMAN RESOURCES QUESTIONS

Advancement of the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat in an era of "human resources management" and "accountability": a new beginning?

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the General Assembly his comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Advancement of the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat in an era of 'human resources management' and 'accountability': a new beginning?" (JIU/REP/94/3 and A/49/176, annex).

ANNEX

I. Comments of the Secretary-General

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "Advancement of the status of women in the United Nations Secretariat in an era of 'human resources management' and 'accountability': a new beginning?" was prepared at the initiative of JIU by Inspector Erica-Irene Daes. It presents an assessment of the progress, or lack of, in the question of advancement of the status of women in the Secretariat. It also provides specific recommendations to correct the existing inequalities in the areas of recruitment and career development of women in the Secretariat.

2. The Secretary-General welcomes this initiative and is pleased to note that most of its recommendations are already reflected in the report entitled "A strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization" (A/C.5/49/5), which is before the General Assembly at its current session.

3. The JIU report should also be read in conjunction with the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat which will also be before the General Assembly at its current session.

II. General comments

4. The Inspector correctly indicates that the targets established for 1995 for the proportion of women in the Secretariat Professional and higher-level posts subject to geographic distribution have not yet been met. At the same time, the Secretary-General notes that no attempt is made in the report to present similar statistics for national administrations or for other international organizations, which would have provided an additional gauge of progress being made in this important area.

5. The Secretary-General concurs with the Inspector's remark in paragraph 21 on the negative impact of the financial crises of the Organization in the successful implementation of the action programme which was launched in 1985. In this regard, the temporary suspension of recruitment also limited the number of new staff entering the Organization.

6. The Secretary-General also concurs with the Inspector's remarks in paragraph 35 on the positive impact of competitive examinations in improving gender balance.

7. With regard to the Inspector's remarks in paragraphs 47 to 52 of the report on the quality and transparency of the recruitment process, the Secretary-General believes that the new placement and promotion system is a rigorous and transparent process.

8. In paragraphs 53 to 68, the Inspector deplores the lack of career development in the Secretariat. The implementation of a comprehensive career development system in the Secretariat, including counselling, career paths and

adequate training, is proposed in the Secretary-General's report on a strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization (A/C.5/49/5). The Inspector's criticism of the emphasis placed on seniority for promotions (see A/49/176, annex, para. 62) including the 10-year period that it would take for qualified women to move from P-2 to contention for the D-1 levels, seems unclear in the light of the special measures for the improvement of the status of women as reflected in administrative instruction ST/AI/382 of 3 March 1993. In this connection, under normal circumstances staff members may reach the D-1 level after considerably longer times spent in grade.

9. The Secretary-General does concur, however, with the Inspector's observations in other areas of human resources management such as "training", "family-related issues" and the "grievance redress systems". Specific proposals in those areas are now presented to the General Assembly in the various reports under agenda item 113, "Human resources management".

III. Comments on the recommendations

10. Recommendations 1 to 3, which appear in the executive summary, are in line with the current plans of the Secretary-General for strengthening human resources management in the Secretariat, as reflected in the report on a strategy for the management of the human resources of the Organization (A/C.5/49/5), in particular in the areas of planning, hiring, career development and training.

11. With regard to the 10 "steps" mentioned in paragraphs 159-170, several have already been or will soon be implemented. The resources relating to step 3 were not anticipated in the programme budget for 1994-1995, and its implementation will be contingent upon the availability of extrabudgetary resources.

12. The Secretary-General supports the request for an increase in the number of women candidates submitted by Member States for vacancies in the Secretariat and reiterates the request for Governments to give priority to the candidatures of women, in particular at the decision-making level, when presenting candidatures to the Secretariat and other United Nations agencies and programmes.